

Why Was My Prayer Not Granted ?

Text : **Mark 10: 35-40 ; James 4: 1-4**

INTRODUCTION :

A. Do you believe in prayer ?

1. Prayer is one of the biggest distinctions between believers and unbelievers.
2. When cameras scan a crowd during a public prayer, the believers are obvious.
 - a. Unbelievers are looking around, texting or whatever just waiting for it to be over.
 - b. Believers have their heads bowed and their eyes closed. (*Acknowledging God*)

B. Prayer is one of the most precious promises of God to the believers.

1. **Psa. 37: 4** – Delight yourself in the Lord;
And He will give you the desires of your heart. (*Heart in tune w/ God's*)
2. **John 15: 7** – If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you,
ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.
3. **I Pet. 5: 6-7** Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,
that He may exalt you at the proper time,
7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.
4. **I John 5: 14-15** This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we
ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know
that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

C. Irregardless of these promises, many “believers” don’t truly believe in prayer.

1. Some have not matured in faith enough to pray.
2. Some prayed and became disillusioned because they didn’t receive their request.
 - a. I prayed that my father would not die, but he did. *He was a good Christian man...*
 - b. I prayed that I wouldn’t lose my job, but I got laid off; now I can’t pay my bills.

D. All who pray have asked for things that they did not receive.

1. Some of the things we didn’t receive we truly thought God should’ve given to us.
2. How do we reconcile our unanswered prayers with God’s promises about prayer ?

For a few minutes let us consider some reasons why prayers are not granted. Notice I said, “Not granted.” instead of “Not answered.” There are prayers that are answered, but not immediately granted. (*No, later, something else*)

I. The most common reason God refuses prayer requests is sin.

A. Sin breaks a person's relationship with God.

1. **Isa. 59: 1-2** Behold, the Lord's hand is not so short That it cannot save;
Nor is His ear so dull That it cannot hear. **2** But your **iniquities**
have made a **separation** between you and your God, And your sins
have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.
2. Those who do not have their sins forgiven have no relationship with God.

B. God will not even listen to His own people while they are living in sin.

1. **Micah 3: 4** – Then they will cry out to the LORD, But He will not answer them.
Instead, **He will hide His face from them** at that time
Because they have practiced evil deeds.
2. Notice this doesn't refer to an occasional moment of weakness, but “**practicing**” sin.

C. Relationship with God requires that we deal with our sins.

1. **I John 1: 5-10** This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you,
that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. **6** If we say
that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie
and do not practice the truth; **7** but if we walk in the Light as He
Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the
blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. **8** If we say that we
have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.
9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our
sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **10** If we say that we
have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.
 - a. ALL people sin, even Christians.
 - b. Christians can pray because they have forgiveness - **IF**- they seek it.
2. God urges those who humble themselves before Him to call out to Him.
 - a. **I Pet. 5: 6-7** Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,
that He may exalt you at the proper time,
7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.
 - b. Jesus is the “Good Shepherd.” He cares for HIS flock.
3. Those who walk with God are welcomed into His presence.
 - a. **Micah 6: 8** – He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD
require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly
with your God? (*Can't live in rebellion and still call Him for help.*)
 - b. **Eph. 3: 11-12** This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried
out in Christ Jesus our Lord, **12** in whom we have boldness and
confident access through faith in Him.

D. God answers the prayers of the Christian because of His special relationship.

1. **I John 3: 21-22** Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, **we have confidence before God; 22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him,** because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. *(His sheep hear His voice. John 10:27)*
2. Those who are not “**pleasing in His sight**” should not expect to receive from God.
James 5: 16b – The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much.

II. The 2nd most common reason for refused prayers is asking with selfish motives.**A. Prayer is not the great celestial venting machine.**

1. Put in a dollar and a vending machine dispenses whatever you choose.
2. Many think God is there to dispense whatever a believer asks for.

- B. James 4: 3-4** You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. **4** You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. *(He left us sojourn here as strangers for a reason.)*

C. Prayer is a communication between a Master and His servant. (Not equals)

1. The Christian must never lose sight of the fact that his life has been purchased.
I Cor. 6: 19-20 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? **20** For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.
2. The Master we serve has told us not to worry about the things of this world because He will provide for us. *(But too often we see others w/ more and want ..)*
Matt. 6: 31-32 “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ **32** For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. **33** But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
3. To question what God has provided for you is rebellion against His will.
Heb. 13:5 – Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, “I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you,”

D. When we ask for things for comfort, convenience and pleasure, they are refused.

1. This is not to say having things is wrong, just that seeking them is wrong.
2. In our text, the sons of Zebedee were not seeking to serve, but worldly advancement.

III. A 3rd reason prayers are not granted is that they are not asked in faith.

- A. **James 1: 5-8** But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. **6** But he **must ask in faith without any doubting**, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. **7** For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, **8** *being* a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.
- B. **Have you ever been so frustrated that you did not know what to do. You don't really think God will help, but you pray anyway.**
1. You're in the hospital with a loved one. You're convinced they'll die, **but ...**
 2. You're in a 747 jetliner that's going down and you pray for a miraculous rescue.
 3. God will not grant anything that you are not convinced He can and will do.
- C. **There is no limit to what the all-powerful God can do.**
1. The limiting factor is our faith .. not God.
 2. **Matt. 17: 19-20** Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" (*Demon*) **20** And He said to them, "Because of the **littleness of your faith**; for truly I say to you, if you have **faith the size of a mustard seed**, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' & it will move; and **nothing will be impossible to you**."
 3. **Matt. 17: 19-20** Seeing *this*, the disciples were amazed and asked, "How did the fig tree wither *all* at once?" **21** And Jesus answered and said to them, "Truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' it will happen. **22** "And **all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive.**"
- D. **We all limit God by our lack of faith.**
1. **Eph. 3: 20** – **Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly **beyond all that we ask or think**, according to the power that works within us,**
 2. How big can you dream ?
 - a. What can you imagine that's too big for God to do ?
 - b. God spoke the world into existence.

THEREFORE : As our faith grows, the power of our prayers grows.

The "power that works within us" is the power of God Himself.

IV. Prayer will only be granted if it is according to the will of God.

- A. **I John 5: 14** – This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us.
- In order to ask anything “according to His will” one must know His will.
 - Understanding the “will of the Lord” comes only as one’s mind is transformed.
Rom. 12:2 – And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.
 - Earthbound thinking cannot identify the will of God so it cannot pray.*
(It thinks in terms of self and tangibles for this physical life.)
- B. **John 14: 12-15** Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. **13** Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. **14** If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it. **15** If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.
- That which is asked by in the name of Jesus is asked by His authority.
 - God will never be forced to do something against His will.
 - Therefore, before we pray, we need to consider the will of God and submit to it.
 - When Jesus prayed in the garden He did not want to suffer, **but submitted.**
 - No matter how much we want something we must submit to the purpose of God.
- C. **Therefore, we must never pray for anything that is inconsistent with God’s will.**
- HIS will : God wants all people to be saved.
 - HIS character : God sends rain on the just and the unjust.
 - God will never grant a prayer that is motivated by evil intent.
 - Psa. 66: 18** – If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear;
 - Thus, one cannot successfully pray for evil to befall anyone.

CONCLUSION :

- A. **God is aware of the thoughts of all men’s hearts all of the time.**
- Therefore, God knows what we need and what we want.
 - He not only knows what we will ask, but also why we will ask it.

B. God encourages us to communicate with Him.

1. Prayer is man communicating his heart to the sovereign God he serves, **not ...**
2. Prayer is incomplete without an enquiry into the will of God. (*2 way conversation*)

C. We have seen four things that cause God not to grant a person's request :

1. Asking while there is sin in one's life of which he hasn't repented and been forgiven.
2. Asking for things to be used for earthly pleasure. (*earthbound thinking*)
3. Asking for things one does not believe God can or will do.
4. Asking for things that are inconsistent with the will and the character of God.

D. God invited all of His children to talk with Him as to their heavenly Father.

1. **Phil. 4:6** – Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
2. **I Pet. 5: 6-7** Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, **7 casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.**
3. But prayer is more than asking for things,
it is the act of sharing one's life with God.

INVITATION :

Have you invited God to be the center of your life ?

Are your sins creating a barrier between you and the God who loves you ?

God wants a close and open communication with you.

There is no better time to establish that bond with Him than right now.

Lesson Texts :**Mark 10: 35-40**

35 James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." **36** And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" **37** They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on *Your* left, in Your glory." **38** But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" **39** They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. **40** But to sit on My right or on *My* left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

James 4: 1-4

1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? **2** You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. **3** You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend *it* on your pleasures. **4** You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.